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A
LETTER

FROM A

GENTLEMAN

OF THE

City of LONDON,

TO A

Member of PARLIAMENT,

Relating to the

BILL,

For Encouraging SEAMEN to Enter voluntarily to Serve in the NAVY.

LONDON:

Printed for J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane. 1720.

(Price Three Pence.)

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LETTER

FROM A

GENTLEMAN

OF THE

CITY OF LONDON



Member of the

Reading of the

BILL

For the purpose of the

Bill

LONDON

Printed for J. Robinson in the Strand

(Price Three Pence)



A
LETTER

FROM A
Gentleman of the City of *London*,

TO A
Member of *Parliament*, &c.

SIR,

THOUGH I do not pretend to have any great Knowledge in Maritime Affairs, yet I can do no less than offer to you, in the best Manner that I am able, my Thoughts relating to a Matter of so great Consequence as that which now is before the Honourable House of Commons.

I HAVE endeavoured to make myself as much Master of the Bill, relating to Seamen, as my small Capacity will permit me to do, and to inform myself more particularly therein from Gentlemen who are experienced in Matters of this Nature ; and to me it seems to be fram'd in such a Manner, as that, if put in Execution, it may answer, in a great Measure, if not altogether, His Majesty's Royal Intentions in that Part of the Speech He was lately pleased to make from the Throne, by encouraging Seafaring Men voluntarily to enter into the Publick Service.

EXPERIENCE hath shewn, for many Ages past, how impossible it hath been timely to man Squadrons, much less considerable Fleets of Ships, when there were the most urgent Occasions for them, without Pressing ; and how ungrateful, as well as chargeable, such a Method hath been, most Gentlemen, I believe, are sensible of : But even That is not to be avoided, unless some Measures can be found to encourage Seafaring Men to enter



ter voluntarily into the Service of the Crown, when it hath occasion for them.

THE Bill, Sir, as far as I am able to judge thereof, is calculated to that good Intent ; and since, as I am informed, it is impossible, at this very Time, to mann a few Ships, of the smaller Rate, without Pressing ; how much more will it be so, in Case the Exigencies of Affairs should at any Time, require the setting forth to Sea greater Numbers ?

THE Seafaring Men of these Kingdoms are now actually waiting to see what will be the Event of this Bill, by which, as it is drawn, Encouragements are proposed to invite them into the Service of the Publick. Those Encouragements to such as shall voluntarily enter, are, — An Addition to their present Wages. — The Advance of Two Months Pay after they so enter ; and the Payment of Two Months in every Six, after a certain Time of Service, to their Families, or their Assigns, while they shall be on Board His Majesty's Ships in Foreign Parts ; and several

ral other Matters enumerated in the Bill, which may be beneficial to them.

As to the Encrease of Pay, it will, if I am rightly inform'd, as I really believe I am, fall far short of what hath yearly attended the Impressing of Men for the Fleet, especially in Times of considerable Action : And as for the Two Months Advance, and the paying the Men Two Months in every Six Months, it is to be hoped that the same may be punctually complied with from Time to Time, out of such Moneys as shall be given by Parliament for Naval-Service.

ANOTHER Thing, Sir, proposed by this Bill, for the Advantage, and, consequently, the Encouragement of *British* Seamen, is, That Care may be taken to bring them Home to their Native Country, when they happen to be left in Foreign Parts, either by Reason of Shipwreck, Capture, or any other unforeseen, or unavoidable Accident, for Want of due Care wherein, hitherto, I am afraid many Seamen have been lost to these Kingdoms, by their being obliged, for want of where-
withall

withall to support themselves, to enter into the Service of Foreign Princes ; nor it is unlikely that some of them have been induced to betake themselves to unlawful Practices on the Seas, to the great Detriment not only of their own Countrymen, but those of other Nations, especially in the *West-Indies*, and *North-America* ; and how far that hath been, and may be prejudicial to Trade, if not prevented, every one is able to judge.

WHAT is proposed in this Particular, by providing for Seamen's Passage Home, is not only Necessary, with Regard to the Good of our Country, but is a becoming Humanity towards a Race of Men so absolutely needful for its Defence, and for carrying on the maritime Trade thereof, and therefore it is to be hoped, if this Bill passes into a Law, the greatest Care will be taken to put the same effectually in Execution.

IT is proposed, in another Part of this Bill, to put a Stop, after a certain Period of Time, to a pernicious Practice which hath greatly tended to the Prejudice of Seamen employed in the Navy, as well

as

as to their Families ; and that is, their being couzened, robbed I might say, by those to whom they assign over what they Earn, by Bills of Sale ; in-
 somuch that, if I am rightly informed, when many of them come to be paid, they have little or nothing to receive themselves, because those Bills of Sale, which they ignorantly give for the Loan sometimes of Forty Shillings, or not exceeding Five Pounds, Swallow up the whole, even though what is claimed by the Creditors, is more than trebble as much as the Seamen really owe them. Nay, I am well assured, that Seamen have frequently given such Bills of Sale to sundry Persons, one after another, so that for fear of being, on that Account, thrown into a Goal, they have but too often left the Service of their Native Country, and gone into that of foreign Princes, or States. And though by this Bill, if it passes into a Law, a stop will be put to such vile Practices, I do not find that Seamen are thereby debarred selling their Tickets, or of making over to their Creditors Part of their Wages, provided it be regularly done by Letters of Attorney, witnessed by proper Persons : And it is to be hoped, that they will not so frequently have
 Occasion

Occasion to assign over any Part of their Wages, even in that Manner, since they will, upon their voluntarily entering, be advanced two Months Pay, and be paid two Months in every six Months of what they Earn while Abroad.

BUT it is not to be wondered at, if those Persons who have been thus concerned in sucking out the very Vitals of the seafaring Men of this Nation, are using their utmost Endeavours to frustrate what will be so Disadvantageous to themselves, and tend so much to the real Benefit of those whom they have, and would, otherwise, make a Prey of.

ONE Thing more, Sir, give me Leave to observe, and that, in my Opinion, is none of the least of those Encouragements proposed by this Bill to the Seafaring Men in general. It is this, ----- That if any of them happen to desert the Service, they shall forfeit no more of their Wages than for the Ship they so desert from; whereas it hath been long the Practice to forfeit not only that, but what they had earned in other Ships which were not

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paid

paid off. This Custom of forfeiting all their Wages, hath, without doubt, not only been so very great a Discouragement to the Seafaring Men of these Kingdoms, as to give them no small Distaste to the publick Service, but it hath deprived even their just and reasonable Creditors from receiving what they might have expected out of the Wages which they had earned ; and hath, I am apt to think, been another principal Reason why many Seafaring Men have left their Native Country, to avoid their being thrown into a Goal by those to whom they have been indebted.

THESE, Sir, are some of the Encouragements which are proposed by this Bill, for inviting Seafaring Men to enter voluntarily into the Service of the Royal Navy. Several others there are, which I will not take up any more of your Time to enumerate. And as I apprehend the chief, I may say the only Intent of the Bill is to distinguish Volunteers, by these Encouragements, from impress Men ; and since the Seafaring Men of these Kingdoms are now waiting to know (as I have already observed) what will be the Event thereof, and will not enter themselves

selves on Board any of His Majesty's Ships which
 are now fitting out, even though the Service had never
 so pressing an Occasion for them, I can do no less than
 heartily wish the Bill may pass into a Law, in hopes
 it will induce them voluntarily to enter; otherwise
 the Method of impressing, which hath been so much
 complained of, must unavoidable be continued, when-
 ever there shall be a Necessity for their Service;
 and how much, and in what Manner, that may af-
 fect Trade, former Experience hath so amply shewn,
 that there is no Need for me to enlarge thereupon.

London, February

24, 1727-8.

I am,

S I R,

Your most humble
 Servant,

A. B.

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complained of, must be continued, when
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and how much, and in what Manner, they may be
lost Trade, former Experience hath too amply shewn,
that there is no Need for me to enlarge thereupon.



I am,

London, February

SIR,

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Your most humble
Servant

A. B.

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